A Chest of Stories

Francisco C. Xavier

Cornélio Pires

Part Two

A CHEST OF STORIES

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THE MATTER OF EXCUSISM

You ask that I should speak, my friend,
Dear Pontes José, sincere,
About the ills of weak excuse
Within the field of faith we hold dear.

Excusism grows so wide
In causes left defenseless so,
Your kindly question, truth be told,
Brings more surprise than you may know.

I understand. At times, indeed,
Trials shake us to the core;
One longs to act, to do one's part—
Yet strength seems absent at the door.

And yet, how often, truth be said,
In duties we could well embrace,
The task demands a little strain—
We simply will not take our place.

From flight to flight along life's road,
The spirit loses inward peace;
Defeat walks boldly in the front,
Excuse trails after without cease.

Who begs for fleshly birth again
Beyond the veil will pray and cry;
But once on Earth in human form,
Most quickly find a way to fly.

God's helping hand is never gone—
The soul is fully aware of this;

It has the means to overcome,
But fears the labor it might miss.

The farmer fleeing from his field
Ends up in tears and loud complaint,
Withdrawn inside his shell of self,
Like turtle timid, small and faint.

So many follies we behold,
My dear friend Pontes, far and near;
The dramas born of "excusism"
Provide examples by the year.

To serve among the sick she came—
Reborn was Lia Strow;
Then fled the post, declaring she
Possessed a stomach frail and low.

With mournful face beside the ill,
As if their grief his heart had torn,
Good Doctor Bentes sighed and said
He'd leave the healing art he'd sworn.

Our sister Cora sought the charge
To guide young minds in learning's art;
But seeing classrooms full and loud,
Cried, "Spots before my eyes!"—depart!

Teotônia helped the orphaned ones
In Mata do Açude's care;
One day she stopped, proclaiming loud
Her health could bear no further wear.

Within the field of mediumship
The vows fall, one after one;
Excusism in that realm
Seems plague beneath the spirit sun.

Observing works of charity
At "Sister Rosenda's Aid,"
Good Nico left, announcing he
Was to his distant farm conveyed.

Beholding tasks that multiplied,
Medium Jeremy Steve
Abandoned all, alleging trials
Of some afflicted relative.

In healing passes Sister Clara
Joined with fervor, bright and fair;
One day she vanished, saying she
Was dizzy spinning everywhere.

When service widened, deep and wide,
Off hurried Adam Torre;
Declaring he could never stand
The world's vast tide of pain and woe.

With duties stretching long and wide,
Our medium, dear Dona Maria
Left the Center, claiming she
Was nervous, sad, in melancholia.

From active group in Queimadas
Good Joana slipped away,
Saying faults from former lives
Too heavily upon her lay.

Fearing sacrifice and strain,
Medium Lina Simões
Deserted, sighing, blaming still
Her own imperfect inclinations.

So, there it is—Excusism
Disturbs, delays, and dulls the mind;
A stagnant thought, like hardened stone,
Leaves living conscience paralyzed.

Yet God is Mercy, pure and wise;
Rebirth unfolds beneath His eyes.
Through coming lives, through loss and pain,
We learn to serve Love's realm again

GUILT AND ILLNESS

I have received your kindly note,
My dear good Juca Beirão;
You ask that I should speak a word
On guilt and reincarnation.

From such a thoughtful, friendly plea
I cannot turn aside;
Forgive the simple way I speak—
Plain truths I will not hide.

You know, my friend, the soul of man,
Be it here or there in span,
Moves through time still carrying on
The work it shaped by its own hand.

When we bring harm to someone else,
According to the law divine,
We plant within our very path
A seed that ripens in due time.

Time appears and disappears
In hours of shadow and of sun;
Yet comes a day among the days
When what was sown at last is done.

The worth of this I can't reduce
To coins of small and easy sum;
For every effect that we behold
Has cause from which it must have come.

So, in response to what you ask,
Without revealing who or where,
I'll share a few familiar cases
Entrusted to my care.

To save the moments rushing on
With tireless wings above,
Let us speak of faults we made
Against ourselves in reckless love.

Antonico Vanzeti drowned
His days in drink, in endless spree;
Reborn, he now must daily face
The trial of diabetes' decree.

Emilota of Traíras
Chose abortions without fear;
Reborn, she longs for children now—
But sterility draws near.

Ana Frozzi left the world
In habits of excess and gloss;
Returned to Earth, she bears the weight
Of lipomatosis' loss.

Through heavy drugs and wild abuse
Léo Faria passed away;
Today he comes by fragile birth,
Hemophilia marks his way.

Mira Vilar, with beauty blessed,
Her gift in vanity did mar;
Reborn, she bears persistent ills
No healing seems to bar.

Odorico of Ipanema
Chose the waters in despair;
Returned, he struggles now for breath
With emphysema's air.

Nhô Ninico, in dark revolt,
Shot at his own despairing head;
He comes again in altered mind,
Where balance long has fled.

In many cases, illness seen
That lingers slow from year to year
Is but the struggle we ourselves
Created once while living here.

So here it is, my worthy friend—
Record this simple law in sum:

In each one's guilt resides the test
That to each soul must come.

THE MATTER OF YOUTH

You ask for notes, my valued friend,
Dear Pedro Cisso, true,
About a theme of weight and worth:
Youth—and what it must pursue.

A subject tangled, though well known,
Discussed in every land,
For it involves that precious gift
Of freedom in each hand.

Youth is that season bright with joy,
With love and hopeful flame—
A blooming rose in radiant spring,
With hidden thorns the same.

Many a youngster firmly thinks
That happiness lies far from home;
He leaves the hearth to face a world
Rougher than fields he's known.

So often does the eager lad
Chase pleasures swift and wild—
Too late he finds he has undone
The future once he smiled.

Youth, above all else, indeed—
Through yes or no, through rise or fall—
Is that decisive, shaping hour
That defines the self for all.

The spirit, ere the cradle's sway,
Beholding goodness shine,
Dreams mighty tasks, makes solemn vows
In realms of light divine.

Here it asks for sacrifice,
For struggles brave and new;
And some even beg for pain
To prove their purpose true.

Existence opens once again,
Childhood gently slips away;
Then youth appears with sovereign power
To choose its destined way.

And thus, we see so many young
In impulses extreme,
Beginning doubts, rebellions fierce,
Forgetting what they dream.

Before the call of duty clear
To obligations just,
Explode the stubborn cries of pride,
Desertions born of distrust.

So many are the saddened tales
Of deep and sharp dismay
In conflicts we ourselves have known
Along the human way.

I tell you frankly, friend of mine—
Now freed from mortal side,
I see each story differently
From spirit's broader tide.

Dedé Noronha once was born
For engineering's art;
But finding study steep and long,
To cannabis turned his heart.

Zico asked for weighty tasks,
To serve and help mankind;
Yet facing trials marked his path—
He changed his name and mind.

Lilia prayed for illness stern
To lift her soul above;
But when the pain before her stood,
She chose death over love.

Our brother Tino Fraza begged
For discipline severe;

Yet finding parents firm at home,
He fled from duty's sphere.

João José implored for want
To strengthen faith inside;
But meeting poverty face to face,
He turned to wounded pride.

Vitória Maria sought
A bitter life to grow;
Yet seeing her chosen road,
Rebelled against the blow.

Still, let us not forget the hosts—
The millions strong and bright—
Of faithful youth who strive each day
For higher paths of light.

As for the rest, we may recall
A phrase both plain and wise,
From our good friend Adão Morais:
"Where elders fail, the young one cries."

MONEY IN THE MATTER

You wish to know, my Breno dear,
How money, from beyond, appears—
How we, from this side of the veil,
Behold its course through human years.

Money, seen from spirit spheres—
Attend with care to what I say—
Is engine of progression's road,
A lever set to serve the Way.

Recalling studies held Above,
A thought in shining letters stands:
"Finance gives birth to honest work,
And work makes wealth in willing hands."

Consider heaven's radiant gleam
In blessings gathered day by day,
When coins are changed through charity
In love's exchange-rate, heaven's way.

No soul on Earth can fully know
The light a single coin may start,
When offered as a passing gift
Into a loving, faithful heart.

A coin bestowed in Love's dear name—
I scarce can paint its mystic role;
Wherever it begins to serve,
It shines—a star within the soul.

Here, it sustains a grieving mother,
Working quiet, soft, unseen;
There, it restores a fragile child
To laughter bright and eyes that gleam.

It turns into a sheltering roof,
Protection for a life upright;
A remedy applied today
That yields tomorrow's health and light.

Beyond, it turns to books of light,
To clothing, bread, and schools anew;
A generous hand of blessing's grace
Restoring hearts and hope in view.

And more than all, this humble wealth,
In greatness I cannot express,
Becomes the unseen mortar laid
In building human progress.

It is a many-shaped machine,
A tower rising, firm and broad;
Commerce joined with fraternity,
And education turned to God.

Money, used in Heaven's name,
Has wrought no evil I have known;
What harms the coin and clouds its worth
Is miser's claw around his own.

Finance alone breeds not despair,
Nor madness, sorrow, nor undoing;
As says a phrase both plain and fair:
"Money reflects the one pursuing."

Credit without honest toil,
And coffers filled yet standing still—
Two plagues that gnaw the world away
And sap its strength and noble will.

But money bearing passport good,
Stamped with intention pure and bright,
Is always servant of the Life—
It injures none when used aright.

The Christ once said: "For wealthy souls
The gate of Heaven is not wide…"
For hardened hearts already dwell
In private hell of selfish pride.

ANTIPATHIES

Here is the question that you raise,
My dear and thoughtful Lili:
How shall we silence and dissolve
The force of antipathy?

You know it well—antipathies,
In shadows thick where they abide,
Arise at once, without a cause,
Like sudden storms we cannot hide.

The matter travels from afar,
Like wounds once deep and left concealed—
Illnesses of the mind we bear
From other lives not yet healed.

Ofttimes the feeling comes to us
When someone new appears in view;
We smile and speak with courtesy—
Yet trust does not come through.

Kind gestures multiply outside,
At home, along the street we move;
But inwardly a cold recoil
Remains we cannot quite remove.

There lies the ancient ailment still,
That rarely shows itself outright—
An unseen venom, hatred old,
Reborn again from former spite.

When once the illness is declared,
Let us apply with watchful art
The healing remedy of prayer
To calm the fever of the heart.

And after prayer has gently quenched
The rising tide of inner flame,
Let us pursue the exercise
Of peace and charity in aim.

Reflect upon the distant past—
What history might there be stored?
The one who stirs our deep dislike
May once have struck with bitter sword.

Or it may be, in justice fair,
If we would judge with conscience clear,
That we ourselves once sowed the shade
Whose harvest now is drawing near.

So, when an "enemy" appears
Before our steps along the way,
Let us ask God for compassion
To guide the words we choose to say.

At times the one who seems to us
Like serpent's sting or lion's might
Is but a weary, wounded soul
With thorns long piercing day and night.

Perhaps in other distant times
A fierce pursuer, harsh and wild—
Today, perhaps, a beggar stands
For understanding, meek and mild.

When someone makes your heart contract,
As though within a tightening band,
Think upon Christ—pray quietly—
And do not let harsh frowns command.

Along the many roads of life
When aversion blocks the span,
It marks the hour of stern return
To trial within the Father's plan.

And when the test appears again,
Whether we will or choose to flee,
God places us, dear Lilia,
Within the time to pardon free.

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Before the night, do not accuse
The darkness spread above –
Learn rather how to kindle light
Through forgiveness and through love.

André Luiz

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